

Federal Officials Project Tour

Nonpoint Source Management Program



EPA and OMB officials listen to Larry Lubbers' and Ken Yetman's (DNR/Watershed Restoration Division) field presentation about the Sawmill Creek project.

In September 2002, officials from the Environmental Protection Agency (Linda Fisher (EPA Deputy Administrator), Bob Wayland (EPA, OWOW Director) Dov Weitman (EPA, Nonpoint Source Control Branch Chief), Stacie Craddock (EPA Nonpoint Source Program) and the Office of Management and Budget (Marcus Peacock and Kimberly Miller) were taken on a tour of the Sawmill Creek project. The federal officials were interested in seeing local on-the-ground state projects that highlight the strengths and capabilities of the 319 program to leverage various private and public partnerships and accomplish environmental results.

The Sawmill Creek project was chosen for the tour because results of the Sawmill project go well beyond the restoration activities funded by 319 and demonstrate the power of the program to leverage both private and public funds and partnerships. In addition, the Sawmill Creek project has significantly improved local watershed conditions. For example, before the initial assessment and implementation activities there were no residential fish communities within the Creek's Muddy Bridge Branch Tributary. Today after restoration activities over 900 individual fish (11 species) have been identified in the restored areas. Also in Muddy Bridge Branch, storm water retrofits and bioretention projects have reduced two-year storm peaks by at least 50%, leading to reductions in sediment loads.

Importantly, the lessons learned from the Sawmill Creek project about the value of watershed assessment, targeting of implementation projects, and evaluating the effects of implementation have been instrumental in the development of the procedures, technical assistance, and assessment approaches that are applied to new watershed management efforts in Maryland's Watershed Restoration Action Strategies and elsewhere throughout the state.

Sawmill Creek Project Assessment and Restoration Activities



Linda Fisher, EPA Deputy Administrator, prepares to return fish into Tributary 9 creek. Behind her are (from left) Dove Weitman, Nonpoint Source Branch Chief; Kimberly Miller, OMB; and Robert Wayland, Director, Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds.

The Sawmill Creek project is a comprehensive watershed restoration effort: an integrated series of best management practices designed and implemented to address the cumulative impacts of the watershed's urban and industrial land use on water quality, stream flow and riparian habitat. A comprehensive assessment of Sawmill Creek watershed conditions was completed during the early 1990s by an interagency team of scientists, managers and technical staff experienced in physical, chemical and biological field assessment methods. In 1992 an implementation team, building on the assessment work and a 1986 watershed plan, published the Restoration Strategy for Sawmill Creek. The report identified problems in major land use areas (Rural/Low Density Residential, Commercial/Industrial and Commercial/High Density), made general recommendation on corrective actions and specific agencies that needed to coordinate their future actions.

Over the last ten years approximately \$500,000 of nonpoint source funds have been directed toward monitoring and assessment work. More importantly, during this same period of time, about \$30 million of restoration and pollution prevention work has occurred within the watershed as a result. Projects have included wetland creation, the isolation and treating of deicing chemicals associated with airport stormwater runoff, stream restoration projects, fish passage blockage removals, and citizen monitoring.

